THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRINAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) and (b) In a report entitled "World's top ten rivers at risk", the World Wildlife Fund, an International Non-Government Organisation (NGO), has listed the river Ganga as one of the World's ten rivers facing risk. The Central Government is not aware of the data-base and the methodology adopted by the said NGO for making this Report. The report profiles the biodiversity of river Ganga, and perceives over extraction of water for agriculture and excessive water diversions affecting natural flows as major threats to the river. The Report does not consider other Indian rivers as facing danger of getting dried up.

(c) The flows of river Ganga are being monitored by Central Water Commission (CWC) under the Ministry of Water Resources at various places on regular basis. There is no apparent reduction in the available water in river Ganga at its terminal point at Farakka Barrage even during the critical season. The CWC has formulated a Plan for water resources development in the country that envisages inter-linking of rivers for transfer of water from surplus basins to water deficit basins for optimum utilization of water in the country. Under the National River Conservation Plan of the Ministry of Enviornment and Forests, various works are undertaken for pollution abatement in major rivers including Ganga through interception and diversion of sewage for its treatment and construction of Sewage Treatment Plants and Low Cost Sanitation. The National Environment Policy, 2006 also advocates and integrated approach for management of river basins by the concerned river authorities, ensuring maintenance of adequate flows, adherence to water quality standards throughout their course in all seasons and protection of land resources.

Forest cover

2693. MS. SUSHILA TIRIYA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is fact that forest cover is fact depleting especially in tribal areas;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the total hundreds of kilometres of forest cover loss as per latest Government study?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI S. REGUPATHY): (a) As per the assessment of forest cover based on remote sensing made in 2005, the tribal districts have shown a net decrease of 635 km^2 as compared with assessment made in 2003, as per *'State of Forest Report* 2005'.

(b) The decrease in forest cover of tribal districts is mainly due to bamboo flowering in Nagaland (a decrease of 296 km^2) and Manipur (a decrease of 173 km^2) and also due to shifting cultivation.

In Andaman and Nicobar the main reason of decrease (of 178 km^2) in forest cover was the damage caused by Tsunami of December, 2004.

In MP three tribal districts (Dewas, East Nimar and Harda) showed a decrease of 157 km^2 due to submergence of area for construction of dams on the river N armada (Indira Sagar and Omkareshwar dams).

(c) As per the assessment of forest cover based on remote sensing made in 2005, the total forest cover shown a net decrease of 728 km^2 as compared with assessment made in 2003, as per *'State of Forest Report* 2005'.